

How Should We Feel about Funerals?

Pastor Joseph Clark – November 13, 2020

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

- John 14:1-3

“And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

-Luke 23:43

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

- Daniel 12:2

In 1993 Rev. Billy Graham delivered the Eulogy at Pat Nixon's funeral. He said:

“When we are confronted with the death of someone we love, we all pause for one moment in time to consider eternity.

“Jesus speaks to our grieving hearts words of comfort, like any child longs to hear when his parents are leaving him. What does a child say when you go away? The child says, ‘Where are you going? Can I go with you? Who is going to stay with me?’

“Jesus called his disciples ‘children,’ and in death's presence, we are all children. Death comes to us all and we need the hope of which Jesus speaks: ‘In my Father's house are many mansions.’ ... Here we are as pilgrims, living in a frail, flimsy house, subject to disease, pain, and peril. But at death, we exchange this crumbling, disintegrating tent for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

A funeral is a time for people to come together to honor the passage of one who has transitioned from this world to the afterlife. In doing so we mourn together, we remember, laugh, cry, and celebrate their life. We provide a show of support to those who survive and will miss the presence of their loved one until they too go to

be with them. Additionally, we also hope that we too will be remembered and celebrated in a similar manner when we pass over.

There is a very popular movie that takes place in a prison called the Shawshank Redemption. In the movie, Morgan Freeman's character narrates in the first person about his friend Andy, who escapes the prison. He celebrates that his friend escaped. He laughs at funny moments that they shared together. But he carries a heavy sadness and states. "I guess I just miss my friend." In correctional facilities, prisons. There are friends who have served time together. Years, even decades. And when one is paroled, the others rejoice for them and at the same time weep because they will miss them. They are seeing dear friends depart. It can leave a void.

The Holy Spirit tells us in the Bible, in the book of Matthew, Chapter 14:13-14 about when Jesus heard about the death of John the Baptist.

13 When Jesus heard about John, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. When the crowds learned this, they followed him on foot from the cities.

14 When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion for them and healed those who were sick.

He took time to himself. To mourn, to pray, to process, but he also carried on and continued with his ministry.

When Lazarus died, Jesus knew that he was going to raise him and yet he wept. He wept as he felt human loss. He mourned Lazarus and he wept for his sisters who were distraught at the loss of their brother.

God knows our loss. God knows our pain. God lives it with us. We can send that loss to Jesus. We can give it up to him and ask that he carry the burden with us.

There was a famous children's television program called Mr. Rogers Neighborhood. In one particular episode, Fred Rogers, who was an ordained Christian Minister, instructed children on death. He said, "With Grief comes anger, and I believe that God can take our anger".

I heard another Pastor frame Grief as follows: 'Grief is always going to be a room in your house. We live in the house. Not just in one room.'

So, if we miss our loved ones, that is normal. If we are sad. That is normal. If we are angry. That is normal. If we are numb and are concerned because do not seem to feel anything at this moment. That is normal. I assure you. It is all quite normal. But, brothers and sisters, let us rejoice! Let us celebrate! Let us honour! Lets us remember! Let us laugh, cry, raise our cups in a toast, let us cheer “Bon Voyage. God bless You! See you again! I am happy for you! Good for you!”

Christ told us in the beatitudes during the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are all those who mourn for they for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the Earth. Blessed are all those who thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall receive Mercy. Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are all those who are persecuted in the name of Jesus Christ for righteousness sake, for theirs’s is the kingdom of heaven.

This is our assurance which has been promised to us from our Lord and Savior himself, that no matter what the burden we carry, no matter how sudden or tragic their passing, no matter what our loved one’s faced, Heaven is a place. It is a destination. It is a reality. It is the ultimate reality. God is there. And so are our loved one’s. And we will join them. Our souls are eternal. In the Bible Heaven is described as:

God's dwelling place (Psalms 33:13)

Where Christ is today (Acts 1:11)

Where Christians go when they die (Philippians 1:21-23)

The Father's house (John 14:2)

A city designed and built by God (Hebrews 11:10)

A better country (Hebrews 11:16)

Paradise (Luke 23:43)

The Evangelist, Billy Graham said, “My home is in Heaven, I am just travelling through this World.”

As many have written and spoken: “We are not human beings on a temporary spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a temporary human journey.”

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, The Holy spirit tells us:

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance...”

When our loved one's go to be with the Lord, it is our time to dance. Now is our time to rejoice. We love them. We miss them, we are grateful for the privilege to know them. We are honored to have spent the time we have thus far with them. We are anxious in anticipation to see them again. Continue rejoicing them. Continue loving them. Continue celebrating them.

C.S Lewis wrote “There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind.”

Let us comfort ourselves by remembering Colossians 3:2.

“Set your minds on things above, not on Earthly things.”

Jesus said in John 5:24:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ. Our loved one's who have passed are now with the Lord. They are in paradise. It is important that we realize that today, and remember it, ever-more. It is important that we do this for their sake. For the sake of our Lord and Savior. It is important that we do this for our sake, and it is important that we do this for their family's sake.

Because realizing and believing this leads to objective truths that glorify God. Our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ enlightened us, performed miracles, died for us, and rose again.

He did this for us to understand the most important truth of all. That we can spend eternity with our loved one's in God's kingdom if we follow his way, that we accept Jesus as our Lord and saviour, that we live His way, that we repent our sins, and that we believe in the resurrection. Our faith glorifies God, and our faith comforts us. Of course, we weep at funerals. Understandably, we are sad because

we miss them. But I assure you, we have not lost them! Our bodies are weak. Age and mileage catch up with us. Sickness and disease catch up with us. We are like caterpillars. Cumbersome, weak, vulnerable, and by the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, like a caterpillar that goes into a cocoon, we enter the cocoon of human physical death, and like a butterfly, we are spiritually released to God's kingdom.

If anyone of us were to transition from this world to the next, what would we tell our loved ones who we have left behind, if we could speak to them? If we witnessed the kingdom of heaven. A place without war, jealousy, hate, loneliness, fear, and human frailty. Without dissatisfaction, disappointment, without panic, pride, envy, worry. Without pain. Just pure joy every moment like we have never experienced here on Earth. A place of eternal love and euphoria on a level that as human beings, in this form, cannot fathom. If we experience that and are given an opportunity to speak to our loved ones here on earth, what would we tell them?

We would most likely tell them, not to worry. That the concerns of this world are so miniscule and trivial compared to the joy and wonder of what is in store for us. We would most likely tell them, 'do not weep for me. I am not suffering. I am full of joy and peace! I am with my loved ones who went before me. I am with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I am happy in a way that cannot be described in earthly terms!'

And we would tell them, 'I love you, and I am waiting to see you again. We would tell them, remember how good it felt to give each other a hug? Multiply that feeling by infinity. That is how we will embrace, when next we meet in God's kingdom!'"

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